Basic Principles of Public Participation

What is Public Participation?

Any process that obtains and considers public input in making a decision or

taking an action.



Public Participation and Public Relations are not the same

- Public relations does not include the opportunity for the public to influence the decision or outcome
- Public participation <u>must</u> include the opportunity for the public to have at least some influence to the outcome

Sometimes, We Should Use a Public Relations Approach

- When our goal is limited to informing the public such as in public awareness campaigns, but there is no room for them to affect the decision
- Or when our goal is to change public behavior, such as in social marketing activities

Sometimes, Public Participation is the right Approach

- It is public participation as long as there is a real opportunity for public input to influence the decision or outcome
- Public participation can be very simple or quite complex, it is almost never the same from project to project

Why Should we do Public Participation? For Better, More Sustainable Decisions

- Decision-makers tap into the collective wisdom of the public and have better information to base decision
- Decisions take into account the needs and values of the full range of stakeholder interests
- Stakeholders better understand decisions and often become invested in them, taking ownership of the results



Elements of Sustainable Decisions

PROCEDURAL SATISFACTION

How people feel about how things are talked about and dealt with.

Issues of fairness and transparency.

All 3 are required for a successful decision

EMOTIONAL SATISFACTION

How people feel about how they and other are treated.

Issues of respect and access to decision-making.

SUBSTANTIVE SATISFACTION

How well things are explained, questions answered, topics discussed, and input considered.

Issues of values, needs, interests.

Public Participation also Builds Community Capacity

- Stakeholders and communities learn how to solve problems and address issues constructively
- Communities improve their behaviors, knowledge, and communication with each other

Tell me, I forget.
Show me, I remember.
Involve me, I understand.

- Ancient Proverb

Six Best Practices for Public Participation

Best Practices in the Guide: Keys to a Successful Process

- Clarify the goals for and level of public participation
- 2. Identify where public input can influence the decision
- Develop and share meaningful information
- 4. Engage a broad range of stakeholder interests
- 5. Design a comprehensive participation process
- 6. Ensure sponsor commitment

1. Clarify the goals for and level of public participation

- Why do we hope to gain from public participation?
- Is there a real opportunity for the public to influence the decision or outcome?



1. Clarify the goals for and level of public participation

- Identify the appropriate level of public participation, based on:
 - Degree to which pubic input can make a difference
 - Public desire to participate
 - Our willingness to engage the public
 - Available resources
 - Available time
 - Consequences of not engaging the public

IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum





Increasing Level of Public Impact

Inform

To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.

Consult

To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.

Involve

To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.

Collaborate

To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.

Empower

To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.

Promise to the public

Public

goal

participation

We will keep you informed. We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.

We will implement what you decide.

Example techniques

- Fact sheets
- With sites
- Open houses
- · Public comment.
- Focus groups
- Surveys
- Public meetings
- Workshops
- Deliberative polling
- Citizen advisory
 Committees
- Consensus-building
- Participatory decision-making
- Citizen jurges
- Ballots
- Delegated decision

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Levels of Public Participation

- Higher is not necessarily better
- Select the level that best fits the circumstances
- OK to stay at inform as long as expectations are clear
- You may use different levels at different times



2. Identify where public input can influence the decision

- Identify specific points where public input is important and can actually make a difference
- Do not ask the public for input to things they are unable to influence, or after decisions are made
- Public input early in the process is often most effective
- Ask very specific questions that help to focus public input
- Avoid asking "what do you want"

3. Develop and share meaningful information

- Make sure the public has the information it needs to provide meaningful input
- In general, stakeholders and decision makers should be looking at the same set of facts for input to be useful
- Make information accessible and understandable to the public

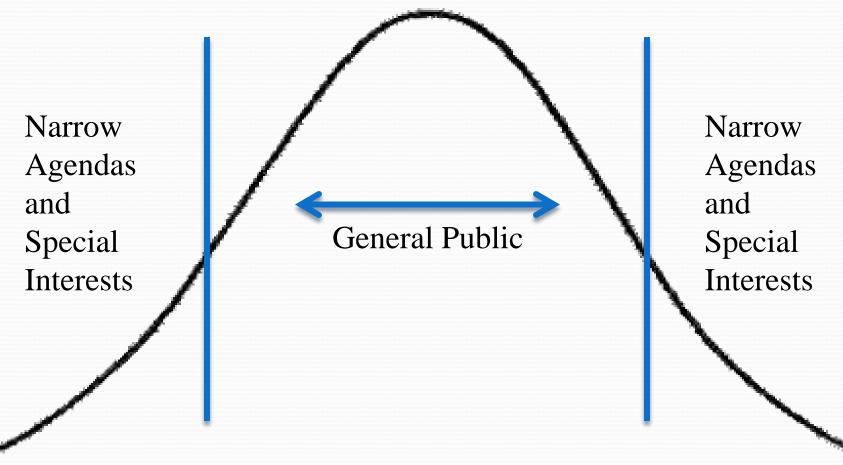


4. Engage a broad range of stakeholder interests

- Be careful not to limit your interaction to the loudest voices
- Identify the range of voices that should be involved in the process and reach out to all of them
- Foster relationships with key stakeholders
- Help stakeholders interact with each other



Identify Full Range of Interests



5. Design a comprehensive participation process

- Start early and think about public participation continuously
- Match up public participation activities with your overall decision process
- Do not rely on single events or limited meetings

Define Problem

Gather Data

Establish Criteria Identify Alternatives Evaluate Alternatives Make Decision

6. Ensure sponsor commitment

- Willingness to consider input at places and at level promised
- Make sufficient resources available
 - Money
 - Time
 - Manpower
- Transparency of information appropriate to the level of participation
- Relationship-building with stakeholders

Best Practices Focus: Selection the Appropriate Level of Public Participation

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"Levels" of Public Participation

- Not all public participation is the same
- We adjust our approach and resources based on the conditions and needs of the sponsor, decision, and community to be engaged
- The most important decision is this:
 - How much potential influence on the decision or action are you willing to provide to the public?

"Level" does not refer to "Effort"

- How much time and resources we spend is not the same as the "level" of public participation
- Our focus needs to be on the level of "potential influence" by the public
- Potential influence is defined by how much power the sponsor is actually willing to share
- Actual influence will be determined by the ultimate project implementation

The Promise to the Public

- Ultimately defines the level of public participation
- Outlines the key roles and opportunities for the public to help shape outcomes
- Clearly defines the limitations of public input
- Clarifies expectations for everyone
- Defines the sponsor's obligations and helps to communicate what was achieved

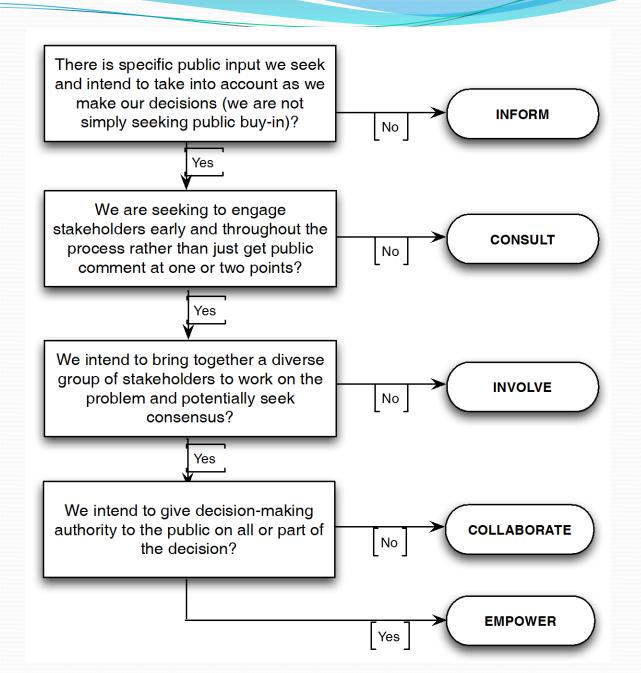
Using the Spectrum

- Higher levels are not necessarily better, choose the level that fits the conditions
- Not all stakeholders will engage at the higher levels selected, we design access at all levels up to the one selected
- Levels can change based on the stage of the project

Using the Spectrum

- Try to meet stakeholder needs
- Never promise a level higher than the sponsor will support

Using the Spectrum



Goal and Promise Statements

- The goal clarifies what the sponsor is seeking to achieve through public participation
- The promise clarifies what the public can expect from you

Goal and Promise Statements

- Be specific
- Make sure they define clear expectations
- Use them to measure and communication success

Exercise: The Role of the Public in Environmental Decision Making in Colombia

Small Group Discussions

- On which types of environmental decisions does public input really make a difference?
- How much potential influence can the public actually have on environmental decisions?
- How do we use this information to help how we should approach the public?

Exercise Debrief

EPA Public Participation Guide

USEPA Public Participation Guide

- Developed by USEPA to support environmental agencies and staff
- Uses text and video
- Provides an overview of best practices
- Provides assistance in planning and conducting effective public participation
- Introduces key public participation skills and behaviors
- Case studies, tools, and links to additional resources on the web



WORLD CAFÉ EXCERCISE



PURPOSE

To have a shared conversation about key questions for (y)our meeting

 Will begin to point us toward next steps regarding innovative tools for public participation

GUIDELINES

- ► Groups of 5 or 6
 - Switch Each Round Find new people
 - One person stays to report to next group
- Focus on what matters on the questions posed
- Contribute your thinking and speak your mind –
- Listen to understand Listening builds the foundation for
- Linking and connect ideas
- Listen together for insights and deeper questions

What kind of tools to inform the public have been most effective?

Why?

Tools for informing: social media

What tools have you used to consult the public?

Have they changed the outcome of your project for the better? Worse?

Consulting the public

How do we involve the public in a meaningful way?

Polleverywhere.com

What are some advantages of collaborating with the public?

Are there disadvantages?

Collaborate with the public

NEED VIDEO

Do you think government agencies can empower communities?

If yes, how? If no, why not?

Empowering the community

Integrating Information From Discussions

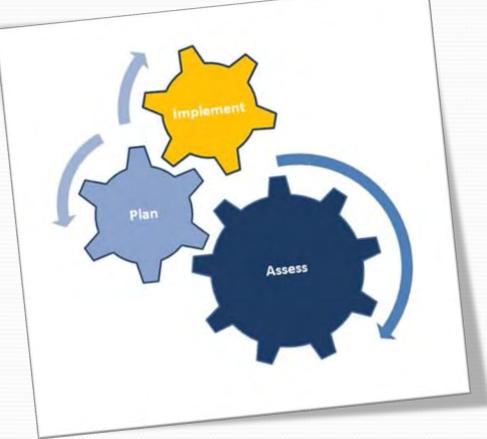
- Popcorn Style
- Reporters report out
 - Reporters may stay at table
- Everyone generates 1 or 2 post-its
 - Wait and listen to form thoughts
- Large sheet in middle of table

Public Participation Situation Assessment

What is a Situation Assessment?

 Investigation to understand the needs and conditions of your project

 Provides the information needed to design and implement successful public participation



Situation Assessments

- Can be formal and detailed or informal
- Requires talking to ALL types of stakeholders
- Document and use results directly in project design



Two Parts of a Situation Assessment

- Internal Assessment
- External Assessment

The Internal Assessment

- Work with all levels of the organization that will be important to ultimate project success
- Clarify the true expectations and willingness to engage the public
- Be honest about capacity, constraints, and resources
- Identify and obtain needed commitments

Results of the Internal Assessment

- Identify decision makers
- Clarify issue from the sponsor perspective
- Identify any constraints—what is off the table?
- Identify preliminary list of stakeholders
- Identify available resources and capacity
- Identify willingness and commitment of sponsor

The External Assessment

- Engage a broad range of stakeholder perspectives
- Talk to them directly
- Use this process to develop and strengthen relationships

Results of the External Assessment

- Key stakeholder voices that must be engaged for a credible process
- Key stakeholder concerns, issues, and interests
- Level of stakeholder understanding
- Stakeholder interest in participating

Conducting Stakeholder Interviews

- Start with community leaders
- Go to all parts of the community
- Identify all stakeholders that will be important to overall project success

Parts of the Stakeholder Interview

- Their interests, history, and viewpoints
- Their sense of who will care and incentives to engage constructively
- How they would like to be involved
- What they need to participate effectively
- What they can expect from you moving forward

Exercise: What Do We Need to Learn from Our Publics?

Design A Situation Assessment for A Current Project or Situation

- What are the key things we need to learn from our publics in order for us to conduct effective public participation?
- Which stakeholders should we talk to?
- What are the specific questions we should ask?
- What are the messages and information we would like to share with them?

Thank you!

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